

THE 2003 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS – PART 2

LOVELL REEVE (1814–1865) AND HIS COMPANY

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In the proceedings of the South London Entomological Society for 1880, Mr A. Ficklin, the President, in his published Address, remarked that the Society should not confine its attention to entomology and that its scope be enlarged to include other branches of natural history, if necessary changing its name. The proposal was clearly given a lot of thought since it was not adopted until five years later, in 1885 under the presidency of Richard South, when the Society changed its name to the South London Entomological and Natural History Society and restated its aims. Its object henceforward would be ‘the diffusion of biological science’ generally. It is in that spirit that the Society has continued to the present, although entomological activities remain overwhelmingly predominant. In my own address this evening, I too propose to speak on a broader aspect of natural history which, while not principally entomological, features entomology in it, at times prominently. I have entitled it ‘Lovell Reeve (1814–1865), naturalist and publisher; and the publishing company he founded’. Two of our Society’s first patrons, H. T. Stainton and E. C. Rye, were among his firm’s earliest entomological authors, and, as you will learn in the course of this talk, works by two other of our revered forerunners figured large in the list of its publications at the end of the nineteenth century.

Preparation of my address has occupied a great deal more of my time than I had originally anticipated because Reeve’s range of activities was considerable though this is not widely known. Those who have heard of or written about him tend to think of him only in relation to their own particular areas of interest. His name and that of the company he founded may well be familiar to botanists and gardeners, or to conchologists, or to entomologists, or even to those interested in the techniques of natural history printing or the development of photographically illustrated books, but none would seem to have appreciated the full extent of his interests and of his personal involvement in all of these and linked them together. I have consequently been obliged to consult the libraries of very many institutions holding archival and other relevant material. Even so, information about him is sparse and incomplete.

I have come to agree with C. G. Barrett, the lepidopterist, who remarked in 1892 that ‘there is a duty always imposed upon the President of a Society such as this which, if he were a particularly modest man would almost make him pause before accepting the office, were it not for the wise and prudent arrangement by which the duty is deferred until the term of office has expired,’ adding, by way of clarification, if it were needed: ‘It is the duty of delivering a Presidential Address!’ I am thankful indeed that this is my last presidential duty since it has been a demanding task, but I can nevertheless say without hesitation that piecing together facts, however sketchy, about the subject of my talk has given me a lot of pleasure.

Lovell Augustus Reeve was born on 19 April 1814 to Fanny (née Lovell), wife of Thomas Reeve of 15 and 16 Ludgate Hill, a well-to-do draper and mercer who was representative of the old school of City traders. The father would seem to have belonged to an earlier age since he has been described as wearing silver knee-buckles, and having his powdered hair dressed in a pigtail, as would have been customary among men of his station in the eighteenth century. In early life, Thomas Reeve had

shared lodgings with Robert Waithman, a close friend and fellow draper. They married sisters whose surname Reeve bestowed on his son. For fifteen years Thomas Reeve was on the Common Council of the City of London, but his ambition never matched that of his brother-in-law, Robert Waithman. The latter was extremely active politically, becoming successively Alderman in 1818, Sheriff in 1820, and Lord Mayor of London in 1823, and was also elected MP for the City of London which he represented in four parliaments between 1818 and 1833, though not continuously. From this background it can be seen that young Reeve came from a good bourgeois family and had valuable connections.

Lovell Reeve was a gifted and intelligent boy. He attended school at Stockwell where he had already received an excellent classical education by the age of thirteen, obtaining in no more than four years eight prizes for his proficiency in Greek and Latin. He might have been expected to go on to a public school or university to further an academic career in which he would almost certainly have achieved great distinction. However, this was not to be since he was removed from school in 1827 and bound apprentice for seven years to a grocer and tea dealer, a Mr Francis Graham, whose shop was at nearby 37 Ludgate Hill, where he was to learn the business of dealing in spices, tea, sugar, molasses and other commodities. This seems an unlikely and most unpromising beginning for a future naturalist and publisher. However, in a fragment of autobiography he recalled how, one day, fortuitously, a sailor sauntered into the shop with a little bundle of cowrie shells. 'Were these shells ever alive?', he asked the sailor, 'Alive!' said he, 'Believe you, my boy, every one on them', and he opened out his double-knotted blue calico handkerchief on to the counter (Melvill, 1901). The sight of the brilliantly enamelled shells made a deep impression on him and his purchase of them for a few pence was the starting point of his passion for conchology, which was to develop into a deep interest in natural history generally.

Reeve was fortunate to have an apprentice friend, by name of George Walker, who was a compositor with the firm of Spottiswoode, a well-known printing company even in those days. This friend was already a collector of shells and knowledgeable about natural history. Together, after shutting up shop, they would spend the evening poring over his friend's collection at his lodgings in Shoe Lane and talking about the origins and life histories of the molluscs he had obtained from sailors and shell dealers who frequented the vicinity of the nearby London Docks. Thus encouraged, Lovell Reeve became an avid collector himself. At this date, Ludgate Hill was probably the greatest thoroughfare in London and it was recorded that through it there passed in twelve hours 8752 vehicles, 13,025 horses and 105,352 persons which was certainly good for trade (Thornbury, n.d.). Young Lovell Reeve lived in an attic room in Ludgate Hill overlooking the courtyard of the famous 'Belle Sauvage' Inn. Here, in earlier times, actors had performed and fencing had been taught. Now, from his latticed window Reeve could see not plays or fights but, instead, the regular arrival of mail coaches into the yard, the guards sounding their horns on arrival and departure. The coachmen and guards were frequent customers at the shop. In the late evening, on returning home, he would divide his time between studying his conchological treasures, which he kept in a two-foot square box, and watching the bustling activity in the yard. Years later, Reeve commemorated his friend by naming a particularly beautiful mollusc '*Cypraea Walkeri*' Reeve.

Whilst serving his apprenticeship, Reeve enthusiastically pursued his study of shells and the life histories of the animals which inhabited them. He was more than just a shell collector, and showed considerable interest in the broader science of malacology. In the early 1830s, he made the acquaintance of Dr John Edward Gray of the British Museum, through whom he learned of the newly founded British

Association for the Advancement of Science, which in 1833 had as its President the celebrated geologist, Professor Adam Sedgwick, FRS. In that year, Lovell Reeve was granted a week's holiday to attend the third meeting of the Association in Cambridge. Inspired by its President and displaying an exceptional thirst for knowledge, he made many valuable contacts which were to be most useful to him in the years ahead. Though not yet twenty years old, he was made leader of the conchologists exploring the Fens between Cambridge and Ely which included Wicken, a happy hunting ground for zoologists and botanists but which even then were under threat of destruction by drainage. Swallowtails and large copper butterflies were still to be found in the fens at that date, as well as rare moths, plants and molluscs, many of which have since become extinct.

On completion of his apprenticeship in 1834, Reeve made a journey to Paris, armed with letters of introduction to the principal naturalists there, and was warmly received at the Museum of the Jardin des Plantes by M. Henri-Marie de Blainville, who was the successor to M. Georges Cuvier, the distinguished French naturalist. At a meeting of the French Academy of Sciences, he delivered his first scientific paper on the classification of the Mollusca. By the time he returned to London, his mind was fully made up that he should follow a career other than that for which he had trained and for which he was clearly intellectually unsuited. He immediately set to work on his first major publication – *Conchologia Systematica* – an ambitious quarto work in two volumes, containing 301 coloured plates, which were published by Longman in 1840 and 1841 respectively. The cost of this was far greater than he could hope to recover from sales, except in the very long term. He was obliged to pay for it from his share of the estate on Ludgate Hill, left to him on his father's death a year or so previously.

In 1841, by good fortune, Lovell Reeve saw an advertisement in *The Times* of a sale of shells in Rotterdam. As a collector himself, he decided to attend it and was delighted to find that what was displayed, spread out on large trays in a stable yard, were highly sought-after specimens that were worth many times more than he was required to pay for them. They were chiefly of the rarest and most valuable kinds and had been collected in the Moluccan Islands in what came to be known as the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia, by the Governor-General, van Ryder, and then sent back to Holland where their value was not appreciated by those handling the sale. Reeve purchased the lot. He brought them back with him to England, and in 1842, with profits earned from the transaction and, it was said, with some assistance from friends, he opened a shop for the sale of natural history specimens at 8 King William Street (now William IV Street) off the Strand.

He also acquired a Stanhope hand-printing press, cases of type, a lithographic press and the necessary printing plates, lithographic stones and other equipment for the production of the books on conchology that he was already planning to publish himself. His enthusiasm was matched by his energy and his knowledge, which was exceptional in such a young man (Plate 1, p. 80), but his experience in trade had no doubt also made him shrewd as well as prepared to take a calculated risk. This entrepreneurial aspect of his character was evident throughout his all-too-short career. Nothing is known of the staff he employed and there must have been several, but it is clear that he was always the driving force in any partnership. His first publications, mainly on conchology but also on botanical exploration, with important works by Dr J. D. Hooker, the brilliant son of the great Sir William Joseph Hooker of Kew, were published between 1843 and 1845 and bore the imprint Reeve, Brothers, King William Street. Nothing seems to be known of this brother, whose name no longer appeared as sole partner after 1845 though from 1847 to 1849



PLATE 1. Portrait of Lovell Reeve in 1849 at the age of 35. Lithograph by T. H. Maguire.

a third partner's name was included in a new imprint, Reeve, Benham and Reeve. By 1850, however, the brother having possibly died, this had become Reeve & Benham, still of King William Street. In 1851, the partnership moved to 5 Henrietta Street where, after 1852, the name Benham too ceased to be mentioned. That lease was later extended to include No. 6 as well as No. 5, and the firm continued to operate from there long after Lovell Reeve's own death in 1865 and

until after the First World War, following the expiry of its lease of the property from the Duke of Bedford's Estate.

Back in 1840, one of the greatest collections of natural history specimens made in the Far East had been brought to England by the naturalist and traveller Hugh Cuming, who later became one of Reeve's closest friends and who left him a bequest on his death though sadly Reeve did not outlive him long enough to enjoy it. Cuming had been abroad for four and a half years and had accumulated 147 large cases of specimens, 90 of which he arranged to be transported in three large wagons to his home in Gower Street. In addition to over 1200 birds, thousands of insects, crabs and reptiles, and some 3500 species of plants, including ferns, of which he brought back 130,000 dried specimens, there were over 3000 species of shells, many new to science. These were to form the basis of Lovell Reeve's great publication, *Conchologia Iconica; or, illustrations of the shells of molluscons animals* which he began publishing in monthly parts in January 1843 from his establishment in King William Street (see Plate 3, p. 89). The illustrations are considered to be 'the most accurate and among the most beautiful of all those published prior to the widespread use of photographic reproductions' (Dance, 1966). They were beautifully drawn on stone by George Brettingham Sowerby II from his own pencil sketches, and printed by the lithographic process by the lithographer Vincent Brooks and then coloured by hand.

Publication of *Conchologia Iconica* continued at the same rate for the next twenty-five years, its completion being finally achieved in 1878 with the twentieth volume. It was a mammoth work, containing 281 monographs of 289 genera, illustrated on 2727 lithographic plates, all but five hand-coloured. Some 27,000 molluscs were depicted, over 2000 of which were described new to science by Reeve himself, including *Paralaoma caputspinulae* (Reeve, 1852) which was added to the British list as an adventive from the Mediterranean as recently as 1985. Such was the quality of these plates, all drawn by Sowerby 'expressly from nature of the natural size', that they came to be regarded as an illustrated guide to the major collections from which they were obtained, notably those of Hugh Cuming and John Dennison, a wealthy mid-nineteenth century collector. Any shell from these collections from which an illustration had been made for that work would always stimulate competition in the sale room. Individual parts, published as monographs, were initially sold at six shillings (30p) plain and ten shillings (50p) coloured. By 1 April 1843, 27 parts had been published. Reeve's plan was to publish two genera together, each as a monograph. A title and index was to be issued on completion of each family and the entire work bound as seven volumes. In the event, the number of additional shells that needed to be described extended the original estimate of colour figures from about 1700 by over 1000 as the work expanded to twenty volumes.

The great shell-collecting craze, which dated from the early eighteenth century, continued to flourish until the end of the nineteenth. Consequently, the timing of Reeve's venture was for him most fortunate. The work, which has come to be known familiarly as '*Conch.* [pronounced 'Conk'] *Icon.*', was eagerly bought by both professional scientific and private hobby collectors and has itself acquired a status among great natural history books bordering on iconographic. Being published in monthly parts at reasonably affordable prices, it sold well, though many buyers might not have been able to sustain the monthly outlay for years on end or even retain their enthusiasm for it. The title page and preliminary text for the final volume contained a preface written by Lovell Reeve's widow, Martha, in which she proudly stated:

'On the completion of this great work, a few words appear due to the Subscribers. In the British Muscum, England possesses a collection of shells—

including that of the late Mr Hugh Cuming, acquired by purchase in 1865—which for richness and completeness rivals all other collections in the world put together.

‘The “Conchologia Iconica” was commenced by my late husband, Mr Lovell Reeve, in 1843, as the exponent of these and other collections. At the time of his decease, in 1865, fifteen volumes of the work had been completed. Although these, containing as they do most of the important Genera, would have been no inconsiderable contribution to Conchological science, still as many Genera remained unrepresented, it was thought desirable to continue the work to a point at which, for all practical purposes, it might be pronounced complete.

‘The literary conduct of the work was therefore entrusted to Mr G. B. Sowerby, F.L.S., who had hitherto supplied the artistic portion.

‘His Royal Highness the late Prince Consort was amongst the earliest subscribers, and his subscription (for two copies) has been generously continued by Her Majesty the Queen.

‘Many of the earlier subscribers have not lived to see the completion of the work, in the commencement of which they took a lively interest, but their subscriptions have been continued by members of the family, or have been replaced by other individuals.

‘To Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, and to the rest of the Subscribers, I beg to tender my most grateful acknowledgements, for the continued support which has enabled me to bring the work to what I trust will be deemed a satisfactory conclusion.’

MARTHA REEVE

The Cottage, Gilston, near Harlow
March 29, 1878

In recent years, copies of this monumental work have fetched very high prices in the saleroom. In 1992, Tony Swann, a director of Wheldon & Wesley, natural history booksellers, reported that a short time previously they had valued a set of volumes at £20,000. He added that he knew of another set catalogued by a bookdealer in 1988 at £48,000, though he doubted it had sold for that price, having been sold on to another dealer. It remains one of the great, finely illustrated scientific works of the nineteenth century and today is almost beyond price.

I have dwelt on this extraordinary conchological work since, through the quality and importance of its text and illustrations, meticulously prepared for publication by Reeve when he was not yet thirty years old and so carefully and tastefully executed in line with his original plan, Reeve was able to bring regular revenue into his company and to build up sufficient capital such as would enable him to expand into other branches of natural history and science—botany, bryology, phycology, arachnology, entomology, ornithology and mammalia, as well as horticulture, geology, mineralogy, exploration and photography.

In 1844, the ambitious young Reeve began negotiating to take over the *Botanical Magazine* from Samuel Curtis, which Samuel’s father, William Curtis had founded in 1787 (Plate 2). He had already published one work that year—under the imprint Reeve Brothers of King William Street—the first of three volumes by Dr Joseph Dalton Hooker in his series *Botany of the Antarctic Voyage of Her Majesty’s Ships Erebus and Terror (1839–43)*. It contained 200 colour plates. In the same year he took over and published Sir William Hooker’s *London Journal of Botany* under the revised imprint, Reeve, Benham and Reeve. In 1845 he finally obtained control of

CURTIS'S
 BOTANICAL MAGAZINE,

COMPRISING THE

Plants of the Royal Gardens of Kew,

AND

OF OTHER BOTANICAL ESTABLISHMENTS IN GREAT BRITAIN;

WITH SUITABLE DESCRIPTIONS;

AND

A SUPPLEMENT OF BOTANICAL AND HORTICULTURAL INFORMATION;

BY

SIR WILLIAM JACKSON HOOKER, K.H., D.C.L., OXON.

L.L.D. F.R.S., and L.S., Vice-President of the Linnæan Society, and Director of the Royal Gardens of Kew.

VOL. I.

OF THE THIRD SERIES;

(Or Vol. LXXI. of the whole Work.)



"Nature and Art t'adorn the page combine
 And flowers exotic grace our northern clime."

LONDON:

REEVE, BROTHERS, KING WILLIAM STREET, STRAND:

1845.

PLATE 2. The cover of the renamed *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, the first under Lovell Reeve's management. Published in July 1845, it shows the spectacular newly opened Great Palm House at Kew, designed by Decimus Burton and Richard Turner.

what was then renamed *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, and in July published the first issue under his management. The price per monthly issue was 3s.6d (17½p) coloured and 2s.6d (12½p) plain. These new publications brought him into close and regular contact with the Hookers of Kew and other leading botanists of the day. The colour plates, often with one large plate folded to accommodate images of large specimens, which had previously been hand-coloured line-engravings, were thenceforward produced as hand-coloured lithographs, a medium which gave a far more delicate result. The botanical artist W. H. Fitch, whom Sir William Hooker employed at Kew, was an immediate convert to the merits of lithographic printing.

In 1849, a financial crisis loomed for the *Botanical Magazine* due to falling circulation and Reeve proposed to reduce the number of plates in order to cut costs. He had problems with Sir William Hooker who objected strongly to this plan and who at the same time wanted a higher fee to be paid for his own text and also for his artist, Fitch, but the economics of the magazine, which was also suffering from severe competition, made economies essential. Reeve could not afford to sustain losses at the same time as he was expanding his list of other titles, though he benefited from the *Botanical Magazine's* reputation which had grown markedly under Sir William Hooker's editorship and his own proprietorship.

The flow of publications from the King William Street premises increased steadily with the appearance in 1845 and 1846 of further works on molluscs by Agnes Catlow and Lovell Reeve himself; and on botany and related subjects under the authorship amongst others of J. D. Hooker, W. H. Harvey and C. D. Badham. Of particular beauty was the latter's well-illustrated book, *A Treatise on the esculent* [i.e. edible] *Funguses of England*, on which a reviewer at the time commented that the collector could scarcely make a mistake! One would hope not. Harvey's *Phycologia Britannica; or, a history of British Seaweeds*, published in parts between 1849 and 1851 and bound in volumes with 360 colour plates, each species being given a plate to itself, was to become a standard work.

The nineteenth century was an age in which Britain's Empire grew to its greatest extent. Its naturalists travelled widely to explore and record the plants and animals within its territories, often on board Her Majesty's Discovery Ships which were sailing to every corner of the globe. Although these expeditions do not fall strictly into the category of British natural history study, it is interesting to note the extent of these journeys which provided such valuable material for Lovell Reeve's company's publications. For example, the account of HMS *Samarang's* exploration of the Southern Oceans, was published in 1880, with Reeve himself one of the contributors on the molluscs collected. Other contributors included Sir Richard Owen, the first director of the Natural History Museum at South Kensington; Sir John Richardson, the ichthyologist and Arctic explorer; J. E. Gray, Reeve's old acquaintance and mentor from the 1830s when he was still an apprentice; and Adam White, zoologist from the British Museum. These contacts undoubtedly enhanced Reeve's standing considerably, enabling him to communicate and negotiate with his authors on a more-or-less equal footing. Reeve was undoubtedly a confident, determined and strong-willed man but he seemed to get on well with his authors, frequently older than himself, and retain their respect. Nevertheless, it is hard to conceive how a new publishing company, run by a young man without any formal scientific qualification, could have achieved so much in its first ten or eleven years. A contemporary lithograph, drawn when he was only 35, shows him to be a sensitive and handsome man of charm and dignity.

Other early works in the genre of travel included a remarkable book on *Travels in the Interior of Brazil* by George Gardner, the botanical explorer, published in 1846,

W. J. Hooker's monograph *Rhododendrons of Sikkim Himalaya*, based on his son Joseph's exploration with his drawings of new species, published in 1849, and *Botanical journey to the Western Himalayas and Tibet* of 1852 by Dr Thomas Thompson. The account of his *Travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro* by Alfred Russel Wallace followed in 1853, five years before Wallace sent Charles Darwin his manuscript containing his own theories of evolution which were based on these South American journeys.

In 1850, for the European traveller, he published *The Tourist's Flora* by Joseph Woods, 'a descriptive catalogue of the flowering plants and ferns of the British Islands, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and the Italian Islands'. Over 500 pages long, it contained no plates but included a very comprehensive list of species, keyed out under genera to which there is a detailed introduction.

Reeve's own reputation was growing fast. The output of his small publishing company in its first ten years of existence, working first from King William Street and then from Henrietta Street, had been ambitious and considerable. Reeve & Co., as by then it was known, continued to publish new books, liberally illustrated with hand-coloured lithographs of high quality, while managing to maintain an increasing flow of the journals and part-works Reeve had already begun. 'The letterpress composing, printing, etc., and the litho preparing, transferring, printing, etc., we do on the premises', he had told Sir William Jardine, the Edinburgh publisher, in 1845 when there was still production capacity to fill. He added that, 'for original drawings we employ different artists according to the nature of the subject... For the colouring we employ different hands for each branch.' Most of the work produced and published by Lovell Reeve included colour plates which were of good quality. Being executed on the premises, supervision could be strictly maintained, with the hand-colourists carefully matching the artist's pattern plates (Plate 4, p. 90)—a procedure that the firm followed until well after the end of the nineteenth century, though in 1854 the firm's lithographic press was sold to Vincent Brooks who became the principal supplier. All letterpress printing was contracted out to one or other of the many local printing houses so that the company could concentrate on publishing.

Reeve had been elected an associate of the Linnean Society in 1842, his nomination having been supported by John Gould, the ornithologist and publisher; George Brettingham Sowerby I, the conchologist son of James Sowerby, famous botanical artist, and father of Reeve's artist G. B. Sowerby II; and his conchological collector friend, the traveller Hugh Cuming. Associate members paid reduced subscriptions and had no say in the conduct of the Society's affairs. In 1846 he was nominated for election to the Fellowship of the Linnean Society. The list of those who then supported him read like a roll of honour and included, among others, the botanist Robert Brown, Sir Richard Owen, Sir William Hooker, Professor Thomas Bell, the distinguished zoologist (who bought Gilbert White's old home, The Wakes, at Selborne), and William Yarrell, the prolific zoological author. Many of Reeve's distinguished authors were Fellows of the Linnean Society and quite a few were also Fellows of Britain's oldest and most prestigious body of scientists, the Royal Society. Reeve obviously entertained hopes that he would himself be elected FRS. Charles Darwin, a Fellow since 1839, wrote to him encouragingly on 14 March 1849: 'I have heard an account with what uncommon zeal you have pursued natural history and on this ground I shall be happy to append my signature to your paper and to wish you all success. I hope for the honour of that Society your being in the publishing trade cannot be the smallest objection to you.' However, he was not elected—a reflection, perhaps, of the snobbery of the time rather than his ineligibility. In 1853, he was however elected Fellow of another distinguished scientific body, the Geological Society.

Reeve determined to produce series of books that would appeal on a popular level to the amateur and student. He was not alone in this. Several publishers came into the market with varying degrees of success, depending on the standing and quality of their authors. First was Sir William Jardine in Edinburgh who launched his 'Naturalists' Library' in 1833 to cover a wide range of subjects, not entirely confined to British species. Colour plates for some of Jardine's volumes were actually printed in London by Reeve. Closely behind Jardine was Van Voorst in 1836 with a series entitled 'Natural History of the British Islands' which continued haltingly until 1880. This had good authors, such as William Yarrell on fishes and birds, Thomas Bell on quadrupeds, reptiles and Crustacea, and Edward Forbes on starfishes and Mollusca. The best of these titles were published before Reeve's company entered into the competition. Another publisher, Swan Sonnenschein, directed its titles at a lower age group with 'The Young Collector' series, producing about 15 books on a wide variety of natural history subjects for the beginner between 1885 and 1897 and a slightly more advanced series called 'The Young Collectors' Handbooks', with six works, all published in 1883, including three titles by W. F. Kirby on Beetles; Butterflies and Moths; and other insect Orders. There were others on Birds; Shells; and Flowering Plants but none had any coloured plates.

Reeve joined the field in 1848 with his 'Popular Natural History' series. This ran until 1858 when it was passed to Routledge which later linked with Warne to publish the famous Wayside and Woodland series. In the same year Reeve started publication of a more advanced but still introductory series of Natural History books for students and amateurs which was known as the 'Crown Series'. These were very successful, and included authoritative texts and excellent colour plates. Each work aimed, as the advertisements announced, 'to treat of a department of Natural History sufficiently limited in extent to admit of a satisfactory degree of completeness'. The Crown Series included an introductory work on *British Beetles* by E. C. Rye, whom I have mentioned earlier as a patron and early member of our Society, published in 1866. A second was on *British Butterflies and Moths* by H. T. Stainton, distinguished lepidopterist and another of our early patrons. In addition there were three entomological works on *British Bees*, *British Wasps and Ants*, and *British Flies*. Further titles published were on *British Spiders*, *British Flowering Plants*, *British Ferns* and *British Grasses*. An important feature of all Reeve's books was the inclusion of hand-coloured plates, in this case not lithographed but mainly printed from steel engravings. The excellent Crown Series continued until at least 1891, the last being on *British Fungi* by George Edward Masec, a leading mycologist, and, incidentally, father of Arthur Morel Masee, President of our Society in 1961, whose superbly set collection of Coleoptera is now at Dinton Pastures.

One immensely successful work published by Lovell Reeve & Company, and possibly its best known, was *Handbook of the British Flora* by George Bentham. Reeve originally wanted this to be illustrated with colour plates by W. H. Fitch to supersede Sowerby's *English Botany*, 1790–1814, which had text by Sir James Edward Smith, the first President of the Linnean Society. However, Joseph Hooker, who was relying on Fitch to complete the illustrations for the third part of his *Botany of the Antarctic Voyage*, would not countenance it. In the event, Reeve published the work as the first in the Crown Series, with no plates and no figures as Bentham himself had proposed. For his text and copyright Reeve paid Bentham the sum of fifty pounds, on the broad understanding that he would submit the whole manuscript before the end of 1856. Bentham was as good as his word and the book was published in 1858. It was an immediate success.

In 1865, Reeve was able to publish Bentham's *Handbook* with Fitch's line drawings, as he had originally wanted, though sold uncoloured. In a letter to Bentham dated 17 January 1862, discussing its treatment, he wrote 'I would propose to adopt [a] larger size, the type to be the same as the type of the Preface of the original edition, except that it should not be leaded, – the lines closer. The illustrated edition would then come into one volume of goodly proportions, forming a goodly cyclopaedia'. He offered to have specimen pages prepared as soon as he had some engravings of the figures. In the event, the work was published in two volumes. The content of this letter is a clear indication of Reeve's interest in good typographical treatment no less than in a good text. All his books are far better designed than most of those published by his rivals. The layouts of his title pages make good use of line spacing and varied typefaces and sizes but not excessively so.

Bentham's *Handbook* was to go into seven editions. The 5th edition was revised in 1887 by J. D. (by then Sir Joseph) Hooker, after which it became universally known as 'Bentham & Hooker'. What botanist or entomologist working in the first half of the twentieth century would not have been familiar with 'Bentham & Hooker', a handy comprehensive guide to identification? This must surely have been the most widely used popular British Flora ever, unchallenged by any serious rival until 1952 when Cambridge University Press published *Flora of the British Isles* by Clapham, Tutin & Warburg.

Fitch's *Illustrations of the British Flora, forming an illustrated companion to Mr Bentham's Handbook* was published by Reeve & Company in 1880. They, too, went into very many editions and, together the two Bentham & Hooker volumes became an essential *vade mecum* for the field botanist.

Lovell Reeve's attempt to start a major entomological series for the serious entomologist began and ended between 1851 and 1856 with three volumes on Diptera by Francis Walker and one on Microlepidoptera by Henry Stainton. Under the title *Insecta Britannica*, it did not get beyond those four volumes. A fifth volume that had been announced on 'Hemiptera and Homoptera' was never published and no others were ever mentioned. The series, under the auspices of a distinguished committee consisting of the President of the Entomological Society and other well-known entomologists including William Spence and J. F. Stephens, may have stalled because of Reeve's inability through pressure of work to follow it up. He certainly had a lot on his hands at the time. However, on John Curtis's death, he took over Curtis's *British Entomology*, which he republished in eight volumes instead of the original sixteen but with the same number of 770 coloured plates though at half the price of the first edition. Perhaps he was inspired by these to plan the other entomological series that Reeve & Co. were to publish so successfully during the last decades of the nineteenth century.

In a diary entry for February 1849 he had written of the difficulty he had in finding time in which to think and to work on his *Elements of Conchology* which he had begun in 1846 and would not complete until 1860. 'It is not easy', he noted, 'to write the description of a new shell amid the interruptions of daily life'. In the following month, he lamented: 'I am so bewildered with work, in addition to the demands of business that I scarcely know how best to occupy my time'. Three days later an entry read 'feeling unwell, obliged to withdraw from business'. He was obviously under great strain and the pressure was not going to ease in the years ahead.

Despite his overwork, and in addition to all his other ventures, Reeve continued to take on more and more as he began to engage in publishing literary and photographic journals as well as scientific books. From 1850 to 1858 he ran *The Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts and Science* as proprietor and editor-in-chief. In 1858 he used the *Literary Gazette* to announce a new monthly,

The Stereoscopic Magazine, selling at 2s. 6d (12½p) per issue, with the purpose of depicting landscapes, architecture, antiquities, natural history, sculpture and portraiture, with accompanying descriptive text by writers of eminence. Stereoscopic photographs were to be printed to give a three-dimensional effect. The first book ever to use this technique was *Teneriffe, an astronomer's experiment*, by Piazzzi Smyth, published by Reeve in the same year. It was advertised as 'an interesting novelty' and caused a mild sensation. Smyth described Lovell Reeve as 'my intelligent and scientific publisher', but the process was labour intensive and the 2000 copies printed, each with 20 stereoscopic images, entailed pasting down 40,000 photographic images on to preprinted pages. Reeve published only four books using this process but for a time he continued to produce packets of stereoscopic pictures which were sold in monthly issues of a new venture, *The Stereoscopic Cabinet*. In 1863, publication of a new venture, *The Stereoscopic Magazine* was halted and Reeve started yet another serial, *Portraits of Men of Eminence in Literature, Science and Art with Biographical Memoirs*. Among the distinguished people featured were his shell-collecting friend, Hugh Cuming, John Obadiah Westwood, the entomologist, and Lovell Reeve himself.

In 1863, Reeve brought out his own *Land and freshwater mollusks indigenous to, or naturalized in, the British Isles*, a work illustrated by text figures but without colour plates, which was regarded by some as his finest contribution to their study (Bentham, 1865). He also published a *Handbook to British Mosses* by M. J. Berkeley, a popular moss flora with 24 delicately executed colour plates aimed at beginners which later, in 1895, went into a second edition.

In 1862, Lovell Reeve had brought Francis Lesiter Soper into the business as a partner. Little is known about Soper, who was only four years Reeve's junior but long outlived him. He was presumably engaged to handle the day-to-day affairs that so frustrated Reeve, since there is no evidence that he was other than a businessman. For the first twenty years of its existence, the firm would seem to have been run as a 'one-man band' but, as it grew, this could not continue. Perhaps Reeve had a presentiment of his early death. He was clearly very ill by 1864. In a letter to Dr Joseph Hooker written on 24 October 1864 he told him that he and his wife had decided to give up his establishment at Sutton, near Hounslow and move back to live in Henrietta Street so as not to neglect the business. He had he said, 'that day, managed to get into work for an hour or two, the first time for nearly a month', but he added that he had 'little hope of recovery'. A year later, Francis Soper, in a letter to George Bentham on 10 October 1865, reported that Reeve was 'in a very precarious state with scarcely a hope of any permanent improvement'. By 18 November he was dead. A lengthy biographical sketch was published in the December 1865 number of *Portraits of Men of Eminence*. The photographic portrait shows a man old before his time (Plate 5). Though only 51 years old, his hair has turned white and he looks withdrawn and ill, almost resigned to death. There is not a glimmer of the vitality which characterizes the earlier portrait. A postscript was added reporting his demise and paying tribute to his energy and enterprise, to which the very existence of the magazine itself was due.

Despite his illness and the severe suffering which according to *The Times* obituary he had endured for eighteen months, Reeve continued to work until near the end. One of his last public appearances was at the famous conchological sale held at the end of April 1865 in Stevens' Auction Rooms, King Street, Covent Garden, of the collection of the late John Dennison. On the third day of the sale, he was wheeled into the room in a bath chair and was immediately surrounded by his many friends. For a very high price, he bought a most perfect specimen of a *Comus gloriamaris*, the

*Linnæan Society
from Lovell Reeve*

CONCHOLOGIA ICONICA;

A

COMPLETE REPERTORY OF SPECIES.

PICTORIAL.

DESCRIPTIVE.



Conus gloriæ-maris.

By LOVELL REEVE, A.L.S., F.Z.S., ETC.,

AUTHOR OF THE 'CONCHOLOGIA SYSTEMATICA.'

THE FIGURES BEING DRAWN BY HIM UPON STONE FROM ORIGINAL PENCIL SKETCHES

By G. B. SOWERBY, JUN.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR, PUBLISHED, AND SOLD BY

LOVELL REEVE, NATURALIST, 8 KING WILLIAM STREET, STRAND:

SOLD ALSO BY G. B. SOWERBY, 50 GREAT RUSSELL STREET; FORTIN, MASSON AND CO., PARIS; ASHER AND CO., BERLIN.

1843.

PLATE 3. Title page of Lovell Reeve's monumental publication on shells, launched in January 1843 but not completed until 1878, 35 years after his death. The shell depicted is *Conus gloriæmaris*, a great rarity. (see p. 81).

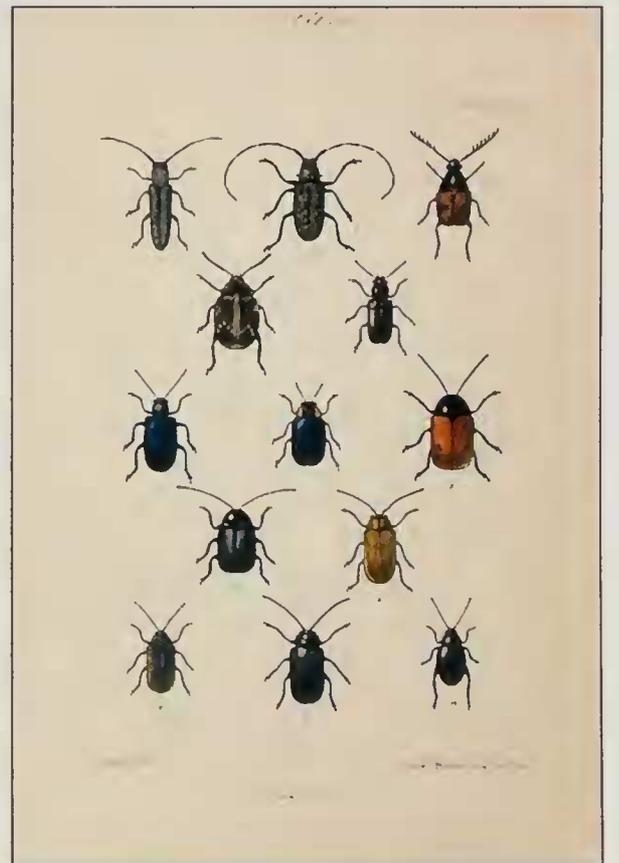
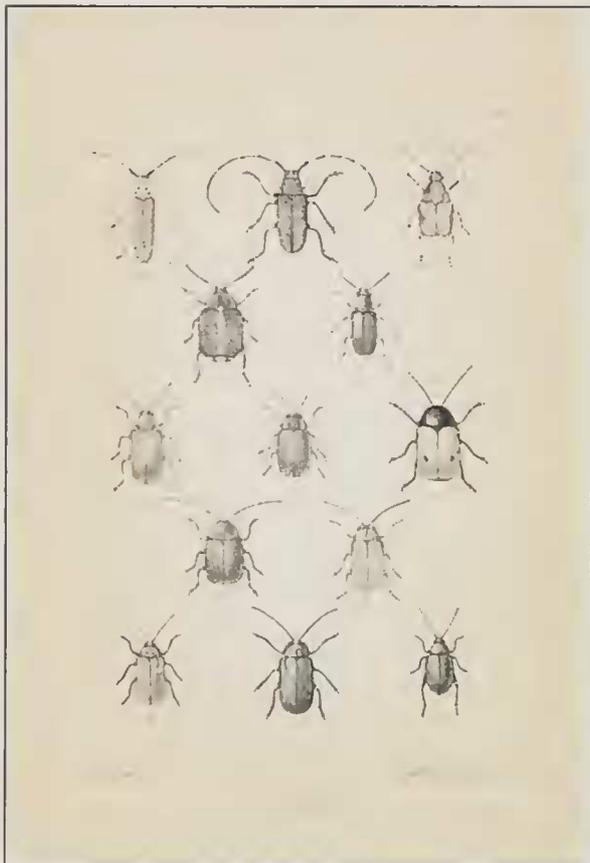
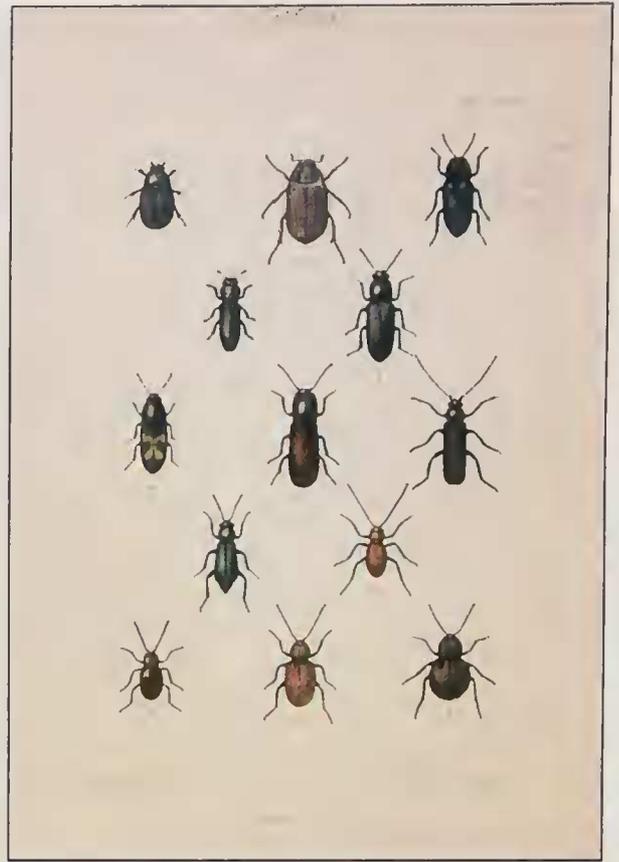
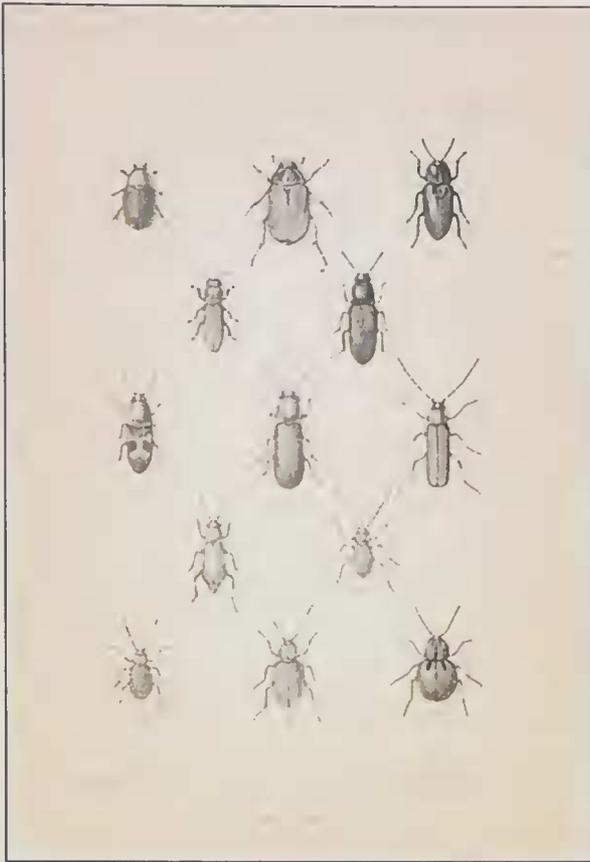


PLATE 4. Pattern plates for Fowler & Donisthorpe's supplementary volume to *Coleoptera of the British Islands*, 1913, showing (left) the uncoloured lithographs and (right) the artist's colour for the hand colourists. (see p. 85).



PLATE 5. Studio portrait of Lovell Reeve at the age of 51, when he was already a very sick man, taken by Ernest Edwards in 1865 for *Portraits of Men of Eminence*. (see p. 88).



PLATE 6. Caterpillars of Swallowtail, Black-veined, Large and Small Whites, Orange-tip, Brimstone and Clouded Yellow on their foodplants, drawn from nature by Eleonora Wilson for her husband O. S. Wilson's *Larvae of the British Lepidoptera*. (see p. 97).



PLATE 7. Caterpillars of Lackey, Ground Lackey, Fox Moth and Oak and Grass Eggars on their foodplants, drawn by Eleonora Wilson for *Larvae of the British Lepidoptera*.



PLATE 8. Purple Emperor, male and female, with larva and pupa, from C. G. Barrett's *Lepidoptera of the British Islands*, Vol. 1. Two male 'vars' are also shown. (p.97).

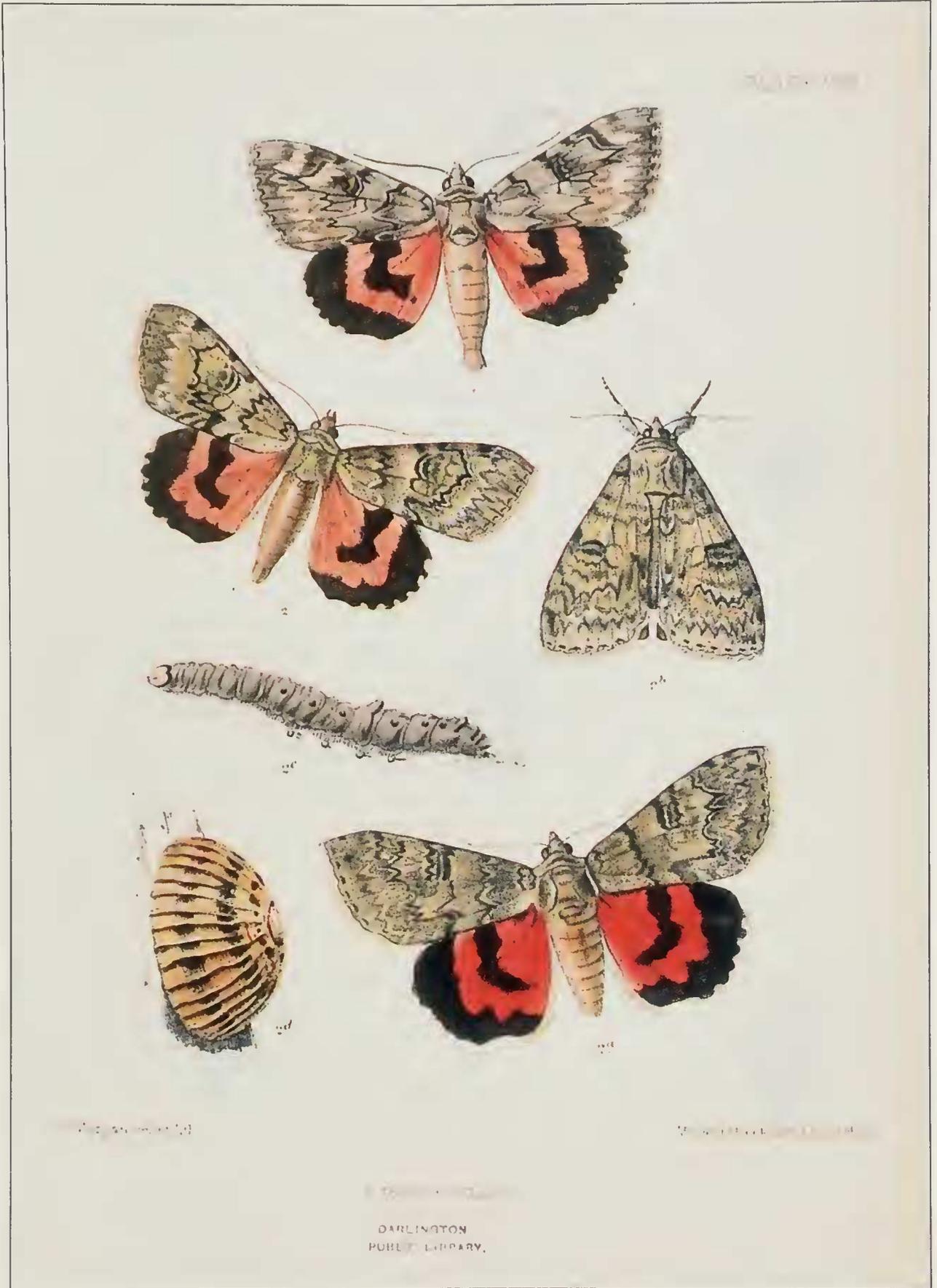


PLATE 9. The rare migrant Rosy Underwing and the familiar Red Underwing moths, with eggs and larva of the latter, from Barrett's *Lepidoptera of the British Islands*, Vol. 6.

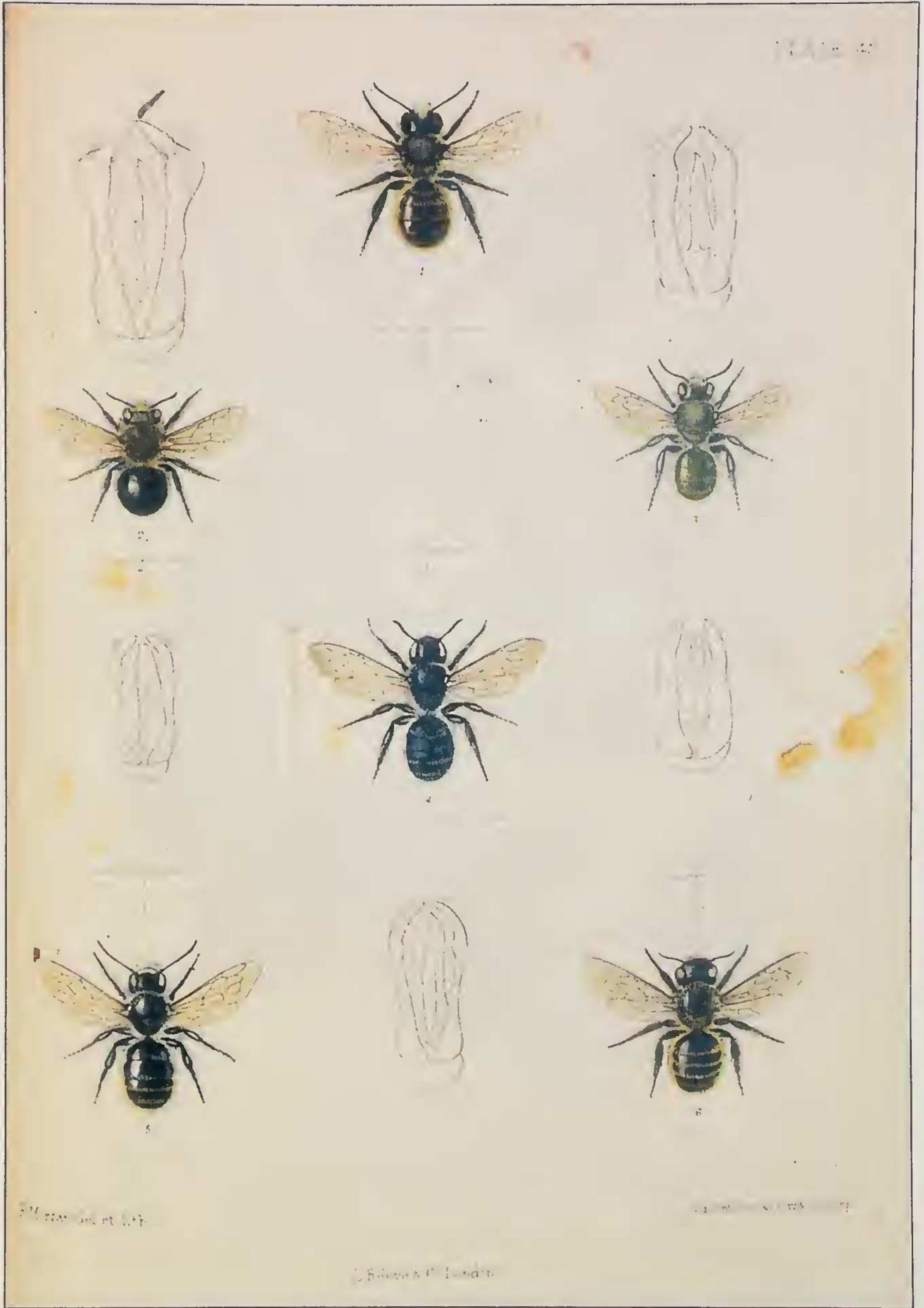


PLATE 10. Four small bees of the genus *Osmia* from E. Saunders' *Hymenoptera Aculeata of the British Islands*. The central patch is a correction to the artist's pattern plate, and the splashes of watercolour reflect its constant use. (see p. 97).

species figured on the title-page of *Couchologia Iconica*, which shortly afterwards he sold on to the Australian Museum in Sydney. In one of his diary entries he had once remarked that by buying and selling shells he procured the means by which he lived.

The impact of Reeve's death on the company must have been devastating. Soper had to contend with financial problems and to ensure that the publishing programme was maintained. He was no doubt a competent administrator and able to deal with authors already contracted and even to take on new titles offered to the company, but there is no evidence that he was knowledgeable about natural history, horticulture or any of the specialist fields in which they published. All the work that had been undertaken over the twenty-three years of Lovell Reeve's control of the company derived from Reeve's own personal enthusiasm and enterprise.

On 8 January 1867, after only one year without Reeve's support, Soper had written to Dr Joseph Hooker that 'it is a slow and difficult process to turn natural history books into cash'. With works of the standard that Reeve had set and was determined to maintain, the question can legitimately be asked: 'Has anything changed?'

In 1883, L. Reeve & Co. published Frederick Townsend's *Flora of Hampshire*, its only County Flora. I mention it in this talk because our firm, Harley Books has published only one Flora which we brought out in 1996 under the same title as Reeve's and as the direct successor to Townsend.

It is not known how and when the last major titles, nearly all entomological, were commissioned and contracted for but it would not be surprising if Lovell Reeve had had at least some hand in their planning before his death. Apart from H. C. Lang's *Butterflies of Europe* ([1881–]1884) in two volumes with 82 colour plates, they all seem, as already implied, to supplement and expand on the titles published without colour plates in his *Insecta Britannica* series which came to such an abrupt end in 1856. The new series of uniformly bound monographs of British insect fauna started with Owen Wilson's *Larvae of the British Lepidoptera and their foodplants* (Plates 6 & 7), published in parts from 1872 to 1880 with 40 colour plates; continued with W. W. Fowler's *Coleoptera of the British Islands* in 5 volumes with 180 colour plates from 1887 to 1891; followed by Edward Saunders' *Hemiptera-Heteroptera of the British Islands* with 31 colour plates in 1892; C. G. Barrett's *Lepidoptera of the British Islands* in 11 volumes with 504 colour plates from 1892 to 1907 (Plates 8 & 9); James Edwards' *Heuiptera-Homoptera of the British Islands*, with 28 colour plates from 1894 to 1896; and finally, Edward Saunders' *Hymenoptera Aculeata of the British Islands* with 51 colour plates in 1896 (Plate 10). Barrett died in 1904 before the last two volumes of his *Lepidoptera* were published, and his last one was seen through the press by Richard South. The publication of the separate Index to Barrett's *Lepidoptera*, issued in 1907, and the sixth supplementary volume of Fowler's *Coleoptera* with 20 colour plates (see Plate 4, p. 90), published in 1913 with H. St J. Donisthorpe as co-author, brought to an end the line of original entomological texts under this great imprint.

In 1915, a new botanical work was published. This was on the *Potamogetous (pond weeds) of the British Isles* by Alfred Fryer, with 60 colour plates. The company's only other significant new work was *Further Illustrations of British Plants* by R. W. Butcher which did not emerge until 1930, with line drawings by Florence Strudwick. No new title in any category was published subsequently, so far as I am aware.

The company found itself in growing financial difficulties during the early years of the twentieth century. The *Botanical Magazine* was proving a liability, especially as after 1904 the Hooker family connection had come to an end. F. L. Soper was trying to off-load it on to Kew and eventually succeeded in having it taken over by the Royal Horticultural Society in 1924. By the time he died in 1910 at the age of 92, the

business was being run by two of his three sons, A. L. and F. R. Soper, the latter of whom believed the business should be sold, and expressed himself 'tired of his connection with it'. Apart from the very few new titles already mentioned, sales were maintained from its backlist and individual coloured plates from both *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* and the *Floral Magazine*, a relatively short-lived journal founded by Reeve for horticulturalists.

Efforts to sell the company, however, did not meet with success and it seems to have staggered on until the 1970s selling almost entirely from stock, reprints or printed plates, coloured by hand as they had been since 1842, according to demand. Some time after the lease finally expired, the company had moved to Kent from where it operated at addresses in and around Ashford. In the company's archive at Kew there appear to be only desultory records after 1911. The last extant shareholders' register in 1911 gives nine names, including five Sopers, two Mitchells and two by the name of Davis. Three were women. Could any of these have been daughters of Martha Reeve, Lovell Reeve's widow who had presumably died many years previously? And what happened to Reeve's other descendants? He apparently had three daughters as well as a son, J. L. Reeve, who is mentioned in a footnote to his father's entry in *The Dictionary of National Biography*. These questions merit further investigation which I have not had time to pursue.

Reeve's own collection of shells and his library had been sold in three sales on 24/25 May 1864, and, very soon after his death, on 23 January and 9 February 1866. In 1968, the pattern plates for *Couchologia Iconica* were presented by Richard I. Johnson, who had bought them from a dealer in England, to the library of the Department of Molluscs, Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University in the United States. In the 1970s Eric Classey bought some of the entomological sheets and coloured plates, including the pattern plates, some of which I obtained from his firm and am proud to own.

The sad decline of Lovell Reeve & Co. in the early years of the twentieth century has tended to obscure its remarkable performance in the nineteenth. This great company, which owed so much to the dedication of its founder, Lovell Reeve, who was described in his obituary in *The Bookseller* of 30 December 1865 as 'one of the most eminent scientific publishers this country has ever produced', must not be allowed to be forgotten. I hope tonight I have secured some wider recognition of its achievements.

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I am fortunate that I have also been able to consult my own extensive natural history library which contains many of the books about which I have spoken and which I have illustrated tonight, including a number from the library of my wife's great-grandfather, Richard Milne-Redhead, FLS, now in my possession. I particularly thank my wife, Annette who has given me enormous support under pressure without which I would never have been ready in time!

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